



NEW
LONDON

Homeless Hospitality Center

Administrative Office
730 State Pier Road
P.O. Box 1651
New London, CT 06320

Program Office
325 Huntington Street
New London, CT 06320

www.NLHHHC.org
(860) 439-1573

**Governor's Proposed Budget FY18-FY-19
Appropriations Hearing
Department of Housing
Friday, February 17, 2017**

Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron, and Members of the Committee, thank you for considering my testimony today on the important investments through the Department of Housing to support efforts to end homelessness in CT.

The current budget proposal preserves funding for critical housing and homelessness services and supports. **The DOH Housing/Homeless Services line item, \$73.7 million in FY 18 and \$78.3 million in FY 19**, for frontline housing/homeless services, outreach, emergency shelters, and the Rental Assistance Program (RAP), which are essential to aid those who have fallen into homelessness and move them quickly to permanent housing.

While this line item supports many important aspects of Connecticut's response to homelessness, I would highlight the critical support provided to emergency shelters and rapid rehousing.

We know that housing is the answer to homelessness. But finding housing can take time and emergency shelter provides a critical bridge to that more permanent solution. Shelters provide not just a place of safety and rest. Shelters are also at the front line of helping people connect to the supports they need to return to housing. Accessible shelter also helps eliminate the public health and safety issues related to people being forced to live outdoors or other places not meant for human habitation. When we pair housing-focused shelter with resources such as rapid rehousing we have shown that we can help many people return quickly to permanent housing.

The Department of Housing has been a leader in supporting system change. We in SE CT have consistently worked to be at the forefront of these changes. Our Coordinated Access Network now provides immediate access to an initial interview to assess options for people facing homelessness. Providers are working together to better allocate resources and monitor our effectiveness. We are focused on data and holding every part of our system accountable for reaching the goal of making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring in CT.

We have come a long way but need the stability of steady resources to sustain the progress we have made so far. Cuts to these services would risk reversing the substantial progress we have made to end chronic homelessness. Cuts to these critically important services could mean increases in unsheltered, high-need homelessness – taking us the wrong direction, and imposing new costs on our communities.

Homelessness is an unacceptable condition for any Connecticut resident, and an expensive public policy problem. Investments in frontline homeless services, permanent supportive housing, and support services save public resources and help families and individuals transition to housing, stability, and hope.

Thank you for considering my testimony and thank you for your support to efforts to end homelessness in Connecticut.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Catherine Zall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Catherine" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Zall".

Catherine Zall
Executive Director
New London Homeless Hospitality Center